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OCI No. 2345/63

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
5 September 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comment on Reported Disunity in the Chinese
Communist Leadership

1. Although reports are occasionally received that a split has developed in the top levels of the Chinese Communist Party, there is no hard evidence of this nature. Most of the available evidence suggests unity at the top.

2. The three top leaders--Mao Tse-tung, his heir-apparent Liu Shao-chi, and Premier Chou En-lai--have worked well together for four decades and there is no evidence to suggest that the united front they present now conceals sharp differences. Moderate differences undoubtedly arise from time to time. For example, Chou En-lai, with his relatively pragmatic temperament and his greater awareness of the outside world, probably would differ with Mao and Liu over the handling of the Chinese challenge to the Soviets. It should be noted, however, that Chou is a veteran Communist, who has long learned how to submerge differences and get along with the leadership consensus.

3. Most reports that a split exists or that some Chinese leaders are "pro-Soviet" emanate from Soviet sources. However, these seem to be planted for propaganda purposes and probably do not reflect Moscow's real estimate.

[redacted] Moscow, while believing that some support for the Soviets exists in lower echelons of the Chinese Party, accepts that the top Chinese leadership is united in an anti-Soviet line. The [redacted] Soviets regard Liu as especially fanatical and anti-Soviet and they would

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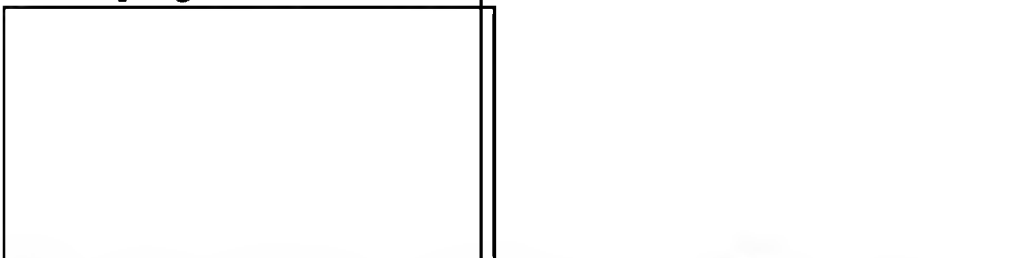
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rather deal with Chou than either Mao or Liu, because they consider Chou somewhat more flexible and intelligent. This would seem to be a realistic judgment.

4. In addition to Soviet-generated reports, there has been some speculation in the West about a falling out among Chinese leaders, based on the supposition that the leadership is divided between doctrinaire extremists and more pragmatic realists. There must be at least some leaders, it is reasoned, who believe that the leftist policies instituted in 1958-60--the Great Leap Forward, the commune movement, and the challenge to the Soviets--were inappropriate for China and even disastrous. Nevertheless, evidence of the existence of a right wing, at least among the top elite, is almost totally lacking. The handful of men in top positions of power today, including the comparatively moderate Chou En-lai, all actively helped promote the regime's leftist policies adopted after 1957 and all are deeply implicated in those policies.

5. Reports that some officials below the top level disagree with the Party's anti-Soviet policies are credible. Military officials, especially, could be expected to question the wisdom of a policy that is causing a sharp setback to the military modernization program in China.

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Minister of National Defense Lin Piao was rumored to hold pro-Soviet views.

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there was widespread support for the Soviet position among junior Party members, particularly the intellectuals. He anticipated a purge of "pro-Soviet" elements.

7. Reports from the Chinese mainland this summer indicate that a secret, but serious, purge of "pro-Soviet" party members is indeed underway. Unless the rumor about Lin Piao is true, however, the purge is not expected to touch the inner circle of men who run the country.

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